

U. S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION STATEMENT FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

Within the spirit and intent of the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and other statutes, orders, and policies that protect fish and wildlife resources, I have established the following administrative record and determined that the following proposed action is categorically excluded from NEPA documentation requirements consistent with 40 CFR 1508.4, 43 CFR 46.210 and 516 DM 8.5.

Purpose and Need:

Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge (CPNWR) is proposing to install eight mileage signs (See Map 1) along the El Camino del Diablo public use road. Some mileage signs currently exist along the public use roads, but most do not comply with Service sign policy and several have deteriorated beyond repair and are unreadable. The new mileage signs, which will replace the old signs, will be consistent with Service policy and show the distance between the refuge entrances and nearby campgrounds, highways, and towns. Besides providing distance between points of interest, the signs will also improve visitor safety by providing the public with distance to emergency services, fuel, food, water, and vehicle repair.

Because the refuge has no developments such as gas stations, potable water, or pit toilets; the addition of mileage signs will also improve visitor safety by providing visitors with the distance to the nearest town providing these amenities. Readable mileage signs will also guide visitors to the nearest group campsite with enough room for them to pull their vehicles off the road; alleviating vehicle congestion on refuge roads.

One of the goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System is to provide refuge visitors with high quality, safe, wholesome, and enjoyable recreational experiences. The replacement of existing mileage signs on refuge public use roads will directly meet this mission by giving visitors another tool, besides trail maps, to gauge how far they have to travel to the nearest town with amenities and emergency services.

Proposed Action and Alternatives.

I. No Action:

The no action alternative will continue the current practice of leaving historic mileage signs which are mostly unreadable. This alternative will not improve visitor experience or safety.

II. Proposed Action:

The proposed action is to install eight mileage signs (See Map 1) along the El Camino del Diablo. This action will improve visitor experience and safety.

III. Action Selected:

The proposed action was selected. The proposed action was selected over the no action because it will improve visitor experience and safety.

Categorical Exclusion(s).

516 DM 8.5 B (3): The construction of new, or the addition of, small structures or improvements, including structures and improvements for the restoration of wetland, riparian, instream, or native habitats, which result in no or only minor changes in the use of the affected local area.

Permits/Approvals.

1. The conclusions determined from the Biological Opinion (FWS 2006) for the Sonoran pronghorn and the lesser long-nosed bat is that the proposed actions, which include education and interpretive services, is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of either species.
2. Two of the mileage signs will be placed within the El Camino del Diablo National Historic District. However, to protect prehistoric and historic objects in the historic district, the following will be employed:
 - All vehicles used to transport signs to the site will remain within 50 ft. of the El Camino del Diablo centerline.
 - Each sign will be placed within 50 ft. of the El Camino del Diablo centerline.
 - Each sign will be placed in a location where there are no surface prehistoric or historic artifacts.

Based on these mitigation measures, the proposed action will result in no adverse effect on National Register properties under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended in 1992.

Public Involvement/Interagency Coordination.

The Categorical Exclusion and Environmental Action Statement will be available for public review and comment at the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center, Ajo Public Library, U.S. Post Office in Ajo, Arizona and on the refuge website at http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Cabeza_Prieta/ until February 3, 2017. Please provide comments in writing to Mary Kralovec, Assistant Refuge Manager at Mary_Kralovec@fws.gov or at CPNWR, Attn: Mary Kralovec, 1611 N. Second Ave, Ajo, Arizona 85321.

Supporting Documents.

Supporting documents for this determination include relevant office file material and the following key references:

1. NEPA Compliance Checklist
2. Map 1. Approximate mileage sign locations along the El Camino del Diablo.
3. Photo 1. Example of proposed mileage sign.

Literature Cited:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2006. Biological Opinion for the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan, Arizona (22410-2006-F-0416). 65 pp.

Project Leader: _____

Date: _____

Map 1. Red arrows indicate the approximate location of each mileage sign along the El Camino del Diablo.

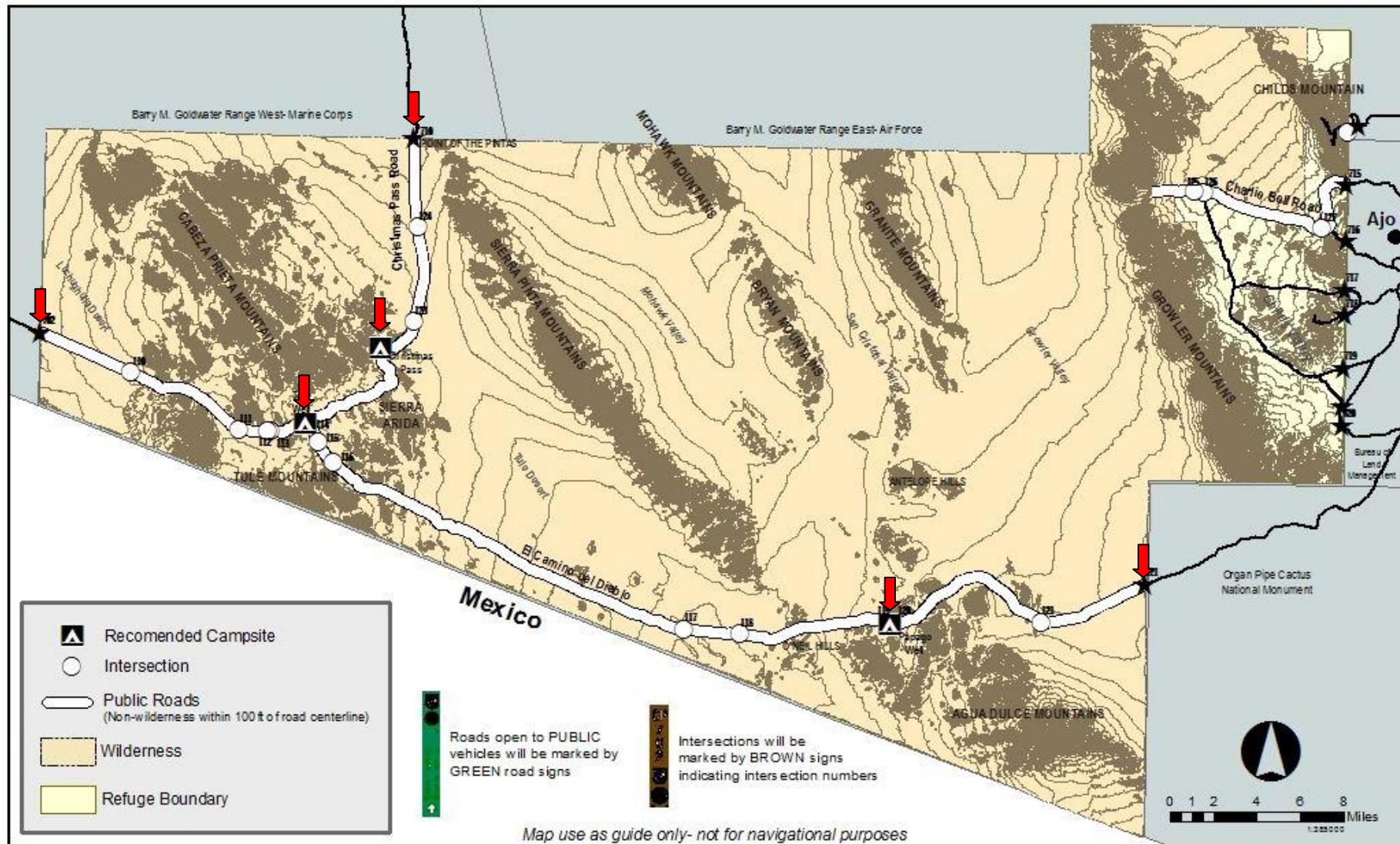


Photo 1. Example of proposed mileage sign.



NEPA COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST

Project Name/Description: Installation of mileage signs along the El Camino del Diablo public use road, Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge.

Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge (CPNWR) is proposing to install eight mileage signs (See Map 1) along the El Camino del Diablo public use road. Currently there are no mileage signs (other than historic signs which are mostly unreadable) along this road to inform visitors about the distance between points of interest.

Please see the attached Environmental Action Statement for a complete description of the proposed action and alternatives.

This proposal X is; ___ is not completely covered by categorical exclusion in 43 CFR Section 46.205-215 and/or 516 DM 8.5

516 DM 8.5 B (3): The construction of new, or the addition of, small structures or improvements, including structures and improvements for the restoration of wetland, riparian, instream, or native habitats, which result in no or only minor changes in the use of the affected local area.

Extraordinary Circumstances:

Will This Proposal (*check (✓) yes or no for each item below*):

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	
___	<u>X</u>	1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety.
___	<u>X</u>	2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.
___	<u>X</u>	3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].
___	<u>X</u>	4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.
___	<u>X</u>	5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.
___	<u>X</u>	6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.
___	<u>X</u>	7. Have significant impacts on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau.
___	<u>X</u>	8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.
___	<u>X</u>	9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.
___	<u>X</u>	10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).
___	<u>X</u>	11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).
___	<u>X</u>	12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).

(If any of the above extraordinary circumstances receive a "Yes" check (✓), an EA must be prepared.)

X Yes ___ No This project includes additional information supporting the Checklist. [Attach if applicable or list if on file]

Environmental Action Statement